



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF



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11 OCTOBER 1966

~~TOP SECRET~~

DAILY BRIEF
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1. North Vietnam

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[redacted]

[redacted] the atmosphere in Hanoi as uncompromising.

The Hanoi leadership [redacted] committed to a long war which would require further sacrifices by the population, but confident the country could withstand any US attacks. Hanoi plans to fight, however, with its own forces, calling on the Communist countries only for material aid.

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[redacted] the Vietnamese wished to avoid Chinese intervention.

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[redacted] the Vietnamese were "more inflexible than ever" in insisting on their four points as a basis for a political settlement.

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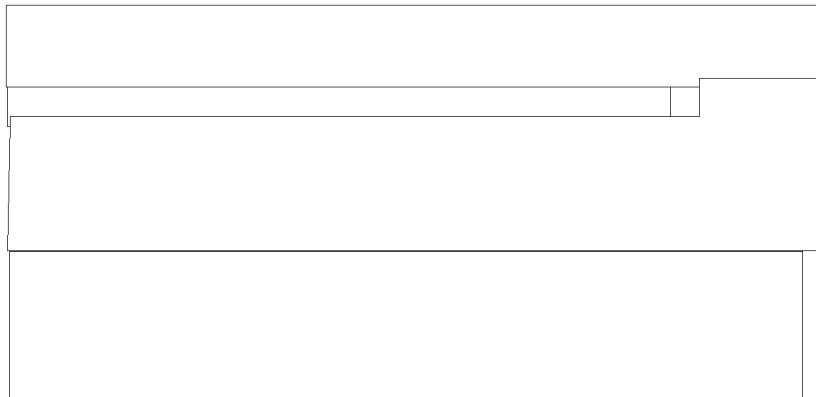
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2. Israel

Since the death of four Israeli policemen from a landmine set by Syrian infiltrators last Saturday, the Israeli Government has been under pressure to strike back. By appealing to the US and the UN Security Council for pressure on Syria to stop infiltration, Israel may be attempting to provide justification for vigorous retaliation.

The Syrians are likely to provide a pretext for Israeli military action. In an interview broadcast today in Damascus, Syrian Prime Minister Zuayyin charged that Israel was engaged in a conspiracy to bring down the Syrian Government. He declared that in response to any Israeli move, Syria will "inflame the area" and make Israel a "graveyard."

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3. Soviet Union

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4. Laos

The Laotian political picture was even more complicated than usual when Premier Souvanna Phouma left on his current visit to Washington and New York. The situation he left behind is briefly discussed at Annex.

ANNEX

A Prince in Politics

Souvanna Phouma has survived innumerable crises in his four tours as premier of Laos during the past fifteen years, and he is now facing another with full confidence in his ability to surmount it. In fact, Souvanna brought on the current crisis deliberately when it became apparent that the National Assembly was not going to submit meekly to his guidance.

The present Assembly, which includes many quite young deputies, has been feuding with Souvanna since it came into being last year. Souvanna has shown little inclination to compromise, and his inflexibility and arrogance in dealing with the Assembly has sharpened differences. Finally, last month the Assembly refused to approve Souvanna's budget, and Souvanna--choosing to regard this as a vote of no confidence--urged the King to dissolve the Assembly and call a general election.

The King, who is considerably more than a figure-head, was reluctant to dissolve the Assembly since he recognized that Souvanna himself was at least equally to blame for the wrangling. The King's council finally decided on dissolution by a narrow margin, however, thereby enabling Souvanna to set off on his trip to the US. Dissolution is an unprecedented step in Laotian politics and nobody is quite sure when or how elections will be held or what the outcome is likely to be.

The prospect of a change in the Laotian Government raises the question of the fate of the tripartite principle that has nominally prevailed since



SOUVANNA PHOUMA

(Cont'd)

ANNEX (Cont'd)

mid-1962 when Souvanna began his present term as premier. The Geneva conference of that year had attempted to resolve the Laotian tangle by apportioning government posts among the leftists, rightists, and neutralists. During the past few years the Communists have refused to participate in the coalition government, but they have maintained an uneasy recognition of the legality of the government--punctuated by frequent loud accusations that it has sold out to the imperialists.

Souvanna, both politically and personally, embodies the principal elements in the Laotian political scene. He is related to the royal family, is a half-brother of the Laotian Communist leader, and has chosen a politically neutral role for himself. Educated in France, his combination of old-fashioned French civility and oriental arrogance has served him well in the Laotian political jungle. He is almost sure to continue as premier since no other political figure in Laos offers such a range of qualifications.

Both Souvanna and the King fancy themselves experts on Soviet policy toward Laos. They are now arguing that tripartitism can be abandoned without seriously offending the Russians because the Laotian Communist movement is now irrevocably in the Chinese camp. This is a dubious proposition, and Souvanna and the King are probably trying it out on various people to see what reactions they can elicit. The government that eventually emerges in Laos is likely to retain at least vestiges of the tripartite framework.

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